

# *Guideline Series*

## *Guidelines for Spouses of Individual Augmentees (IAs)*



## *The History of Naval Services FamilyLine*

Naval Services FamilyLine is a volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for every Navy family. Formerly known as the Navy Wifeline Association, the new name was adopted in September 1999 to reflect the changing face of today's sea services.

FamilyLine was established in 1965 by a group of Navy wives who wanted to establish a channel of communication for all Navy spouses. The aim was to provide a welcome and introduction to Navy life and to increase the spouses' understanding of the Navy's mission.

This dedicated group established an office at the Washington Navy Yard and published a quarterly newspaper, providing information and assistance to wives who were moving overseas. These Navy wives had the foresight to see the need for spouse and family support and provided the ground work for what has developed into a world-wide family support network.

With the support of the Chief of Naval Operations and Navy leadership, along with the financial support of the Navy League, Spouses Clubs worldwide, and other Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard organizations, Naval Services FamilyLine has continued to grow and flourish.

Admiral Elmo Zumwalt established the Ombudsman Program in 1970. The Chairman of FamilyLine was appointed Navy-wide Family Ombudsman-at-Large for the Chief of Naval Operations.

In 1988, the first Ombudsman Journal was published and the Navy-wide Ombudsmen Support Network was established.

For more than forty years, FamilyLine volunteers have maintained a worldwide support network for Navy, service members and their families. Today, the spouses of service members work together to continue this fine tradition.

*This publication is paid for by Naval Services FamilyLine and distributed to you free by FamilyLine volunteers under the supervision of the CNO Navy-wide Family Ombudsman-at-Large. FamilyLine is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.*

**Donations are welcome and appreciated. They are tax deductible and will be used to help defray the cost of this and other FamilyLine publications.**

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August 2008

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## What's an IA and a GSA Anyway?

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In contrast to a Sailor that deploys with a ship, squadron or unit, a Sailor who leaves their assigned command to deploy individually or with a small group is known as an Individual Augmentee (IA). IAs also include Reservists deployed individually or with a unit. Half of the deployed IAs are active duty and half are mobilized Reservists. Most are concentrated in the Central Command region, which includes Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bahrain and the Horn of Africa. The rest are serving elsewhere in the world.

Most Sailors are working in their skill sets to provide combat support and combat service support in the Global War on Terrorism. IA Sailors are not replacing infantry or front line combat soldiers.

Sailors may be assigned or volunteer for IA orders that come to their command through a Navy-wide Request for Forces (RFF) message. If your Sailor receives an IA assignment as a Request For Forces billet through their current command, they will remain a member of their current command, often referred to as their "parent" command, and return to it when they complete their IA tour.

Sailors may also negotiate for orders with their detailer when they are in their Periodic Rotation Date (PRD) window. Detailing opportunities provided through the recently implemented Global War on Terror Support Assignment (GSA) initiative are providing Sailors with increased opportunities to volunteer for an IA tour at a time that works best for you and your family.

The purpose of the GSA transition is to significantly improve predictability of IA missions, enable volunteerism, improve manning and stability at the unit level, and

add detailer involvement for oversight of professional development. GSA orders are negotiated in your Sailor's normal detailing window.

Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC) becomes your Sailor's administrative parent command while deployed. This means your Sailor will detach from their current command, follow the training and deployment track as outlined in their orders, but they will also be administratively assigned to the ECRC.

Experienced Navy families say continuous readiness and knowing resources are the keys to successful deployments. Sailors and their families must always be ready for deployment. This handbook provides basic information to help you be ready for deployment.



# IA/GSA Process

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Your Sailor should have at least sixty days to prepare for his/her IA assignment. There's a flurry of preparation activities during this time. In fact, there is a mandatory checklist they must complete before departing. The mandatory ECRC IA Checklist is only located on the IA page of Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) web portal at <https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil> and on the ECRC website at [www.ecrc.navy.mil](http://www.ecrc.navy.mil)

Activities every Sailor must complete include:

- A medical/dental check-up.
- Online Navy courses related to their assignment.
- Personal preparation.
- Family contact information.

## IA/GSA Overview

The following information is provided to help you understand the IA process:

1. Your Sailor is notified that they have been selected to fill a billet. Sailors may have been selected by their command to fill a Request for Forces billet or they may have negotiated for GSA (PCS) orders.
2. Upon notification, Sailors and Command IA Coordinators should review the ECRC IA Checklist and other official requirements posted on the NKO website. Your Sailor should start to complete these requirements as soon as they have been notified that they have been selected. Command IA Coordinators should be tracking progress and assisting your Sailor with any problems they may have in completing the mandatory requirements. Command IA Coordinators should also coordinate with Command Ombudsman to ensure you have point of contact information if you should need assistance.
3. It's important for your Sailor to thoroughly read his/her orders and to comply with all mandatory prerequisites. The ECRC IA Checklist must be submitted electronically to ECRC within 14 days of receipt of orders.
4. Your Sailor will report to the Navy Mobilization and Processing Site (NMPS) that is selected by training and unit requirements and is designated in their orders. Your Sailor will be there for approximately one week to ensure all prerequisite items and mandatory requirements are complete and that he/she is qualified to move forward. Sailors receive their required uniforms here. Families cannot accompany Sailors to NMPS and are not allowed to accompany them from this point forward.

5. Sailors travel to the Army training site that is designated in their orders for basic combat skills training. This training lasts approximately three weeks. Any uniform item or gear that was not issued at NMPS is issued at the training site.
6. Some Sailors may require additional mission specific training. The location/length of the training is stated in their orders.
7. After completing training in the United States, most Sailors receive additional training when they process through Kuwait. Sailors travel to their assigned mission location after all required training is completed.
8. After completing their mission, most Sailors go through the Warrior Transition Program (WTP) in theater. Sailors spend approximately one week at the WTP to begin reintegration into life in a non-combat environment, attend briefs and turn in their issued gear. Sailors that do not transition through the WTP in theater return to the United States by the route directed in their orders and begin reintegration at that location.
9. All returning Sailors return through the NMPS as stated in their orders.
10. Sailors will then demobilize, return to their parent command or PCS to their new duty station. Command IA Coordinators should engage to ensure your Sailor is welcomed back and checks in properly. The Command IA Coordinator, in coordination with Personnel Support Detachment (PSD) should ensure that all of your Sailor's pay, leave requirements, personnel records, evaluations, awards and advancement exam information are updated and correct to reflect your Sailor's honorable service.





# Important Documents

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Key items that should be reviewed and updated by your Sailor prior to deployment include:

1. Wills
2. Powers of Attorney.
3. Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.
4. Emergency Data Form.
5. Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).
6. Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS).

## Wills

A will is a legal expression or declaration of an individual's wishes upon their death. For couples with children it's important to include who you'd want to care for your children should something happen to both you and your Sailor. To ensure your estate is distributed how you want, make sure you have a current will and your loved ones know its location. Your local Navy Legal Services Office will assist you in making a will at no cost.



## Powers of Attorney

Powers of Attorney can be very useful when conducting personal business. They can also be very dangerous documents as they allow someone to act in your behalf. When your Sailor is deployed you may need different types of Powers of Attorney for different tasks. For example, you may need a special Power of Attorney to file your taxes or for you or to buy or sell a big ticket item such as a vehicle or condo. There is a document called a "General Power of Attorney" that can be used in a variety of situations. You need to know in advance what type of Power of Attorney will be accepted by an institution you want to do business with. Not all will accept a General Power of Attorney. Your local Navy Legal Services Office can discuss options and draw up a Power of Attorney at no charge.

## Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)

Active duty service members are eligible to be insured under SGLI up to a maximum of \$400,000 in increments of \$50,000. Before deployment you should ask your Sailor to verify who they have designated as beneficiary and make changes as necessary. A will does not impact who is the beneficiary of life insurance. To make changes Election Form (VA Form SGLV-8286) must be completed. For more information on Servicemember's Group Life Insurance visit the Department of Veterans Group Life Insurance information page at [www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/default.htm](http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/default.htm).

## Emergency Data Form

The Emergency Data Form is more commonly referred to as the “Page Two” of your Sailor’s Service Record. Your Sailor provides information about who should be contacted if they become ill, are injured, killed, or missing. You can see how important it is to ensure your address and phone number is accurate on your Sailor’s page 2. If you leave the area for an extended period of time, or move, contact your Command Ombudsman and provide your current contact information.

## Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System

It’s important to update the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) after a life-changing event such as marriage or the birth of a child.

DEERS registration is the key to getting TRICARE benefits eligibility established and maintained. DEERS is DOD’s family member database and the primary way to keep track of a Sailors’ entitlements.

Since dual-military spouses are also automatically covered by Family Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (FSGLI), a dual military couple may find they owe several months of FSGLI premiums because they didn’t decline coverage or update their DEERS record to reflect having a spouse. Both members of a dual military couple must update DEERS, and, if they don’t want FSGLI, must decline coverage in writing.

## Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System

Fleet and Family Support Centers provide many services for IA Sailors and their families. They also maintain a data base called the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS). FFSC staff will contact you throughout the deployment to ensure you are aware of programs and services that may be of interest. FFSC also contacts families in the event of a natural disaster.

Whether at the start of an IA tour or looking forward to coming home, IA family information needs to be kept current in the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS). Ensure you or your Sailor updates NFAAS and be sure to update it if you move during the deployment.

To update NFAAS:

- LOG ONTO NFAAS at [www.navyfamily.navy.mil](http://www.navyfamily.navy.mil).
- Select the [NFAAS-Navy Family Member] tab.
- You will need your Sailor’s social security number and birth date for access.
- Update your family information under the [MY INFO] tab. Enter everyone you want contacted in case of emergency.
- You may also take a survey under the [ASSESSMENT] tab to further assist your family and make specific family needs known.



## Other Important Documents

If you don't already have one it's a good idea to invest in a small, fire proof safe or rent a safety deposit box to store your family's important documents. Many of these documents are hard to replace. Even though you don't need them often, when you do need them they are critical. Do you know where each of the following documents is located?

- Birth Certificates.
- Marriage License.
- Divorce Decrees.
- Death Certificates.
- Medical Records of each Family Member.
- Dental Records of each Family Member.
- Veterinarian Records for each Pet.
- Adoption Papers.
- Citizenship/Naturalization Papers.
- Passports/Visas.
- Insurance Policies (Life, Health, Home, Vehicle, Flood).
- Real Estate Documents (Lease, Deed, First and Second Mortgages).
- Car Title, Registration and Inspection.
- Most Recent Leave and Earnings Statement (LES).
- Social Security Number of each Family Member.
- Current Address and Phone Number of Immediate Family Members of both Spouses.
- Wills.
- Power Of Attorney(s).
- A copy of your Sailor's orders. Your Sailor's Noble Eagle (NE) number is located in their orders The NE number can be used by Navy personnel to quickly locate your Sailor if you should need assistance.



### TOP TIP

Organize all of your important papers, make a copy, and store the originals and copies separately in a safe place.

# Your Money

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Talking about your budget, banking, taxes and important documents may seem like the last thing you want to do before your Sailor leaves, but having your financial affairs organized can give you some peace of mind.

## Entitlements

Your Sailor may be entitled to some additional financial incentives during their IA assignment. Most IA assignment-related entitlements start at the mobilization processing site. Some of these entitlements include:

- Hostile Fire Pay/Imminent Danger Pay.
- Combat Zone Tax Exclusion.
- Savings Deposit Program (SDP) allows service members deployed to combat zones to earn ten percent interest on deposits up to \$10,000.
- Complete tax free pay enlisted/warrants. Officers up to allowable limit. Note: Social Security and Medicare are collected.
- Hardship Duty Pay.
- Incidental Expense per diem paid when lodging and meals are provided. This is in addition to full Basic Allowance for Subsistence. Monthly travel claims are required for payment.
- Family Separation Allowance.

## Pay Changes to Monitor

There are some pays active duty IAs and their families need to be aware of to avoid over or under payment during an IA assignment:

- Sea Pay
  - Not eligible after 31st day of IA assignment. Sea pay will stop.
  - Sea counter stopped with the stop of sea pay.
  - Special detailing considered for credit of IA assignment.
- Meal Deduction
  - No meal deduction for entire IA assignment.

- Special Duty Assignment Pay (SDAP)
  - Eligibility can continue up to the first 90 days of IA assignment.
  - If command transfers special duty assignment to another qualified command member, SDAP can be stopped the first day of IA assignment.

## Tax Free Savings Incentive

The tax free savings advantage can be significant during an IA assignment. The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) enables tax exempt contributions up to \$45,000.

The Savings Deposit Program (SDP) is available to those serving in designated combat zones. Military members deployed in combat zone, qualified hazardous duty areas, or certain contingency operations may be eligible to deposit all or part of their unallotted pay into a DoD savings account up to \$10,000 during a single deployment. Interest accrues at an annual rate of 10% and compounds quarterly. Interest accrued on earnings deposited into the SDP is taxable.

To be eligible for SDP, a service member must be receiving Hostile Fire/Imminent Danger Pay (HFP/IDP) and serving in a designated combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone for more than 30 consecutive days or for at least one day for each of three consecutive months. Service members may begin making deposits on their 31st consecutive day in the designated area. All deposit amounts must be made in \$5 increments and deposits may be discontinued at any time. The account will stop accruing interest 90 days after a member returns from the combat zone. To learn more about SDP, visit the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) at [www.dfas.mil](http://www.dfas.mil).

## Spending Plan

Setting up a spending plan is one of the smartest things you can do prior to a deployment or any time. A spending plan allows you to see where your money is going and to make adjustments as needed to meet your financial goals.

It's good to do a plan together so both you and your partner understand and agree to how finances will be handled during the deployment.

When setting up or updating your spending plan look at possible changes to your income:

- Will your Sailor earn any additional money for per diem, family separation allowance, combat duty pay, etc.?
- Will your Sailor be paid for a promotion during deployment?
- Will a reenlistment bonus be received during deployment?
- Will you be working longer or shorter hours?

## Before the deployment ensure:

- Pay distribution is set up the way you want. Are direct deposits, any allotments or automatic check drafts established?
- How will your Sailor pay for their expenses? They are required to have a government travel card to pay for official expenses. Will they have a fixed amount each month they can access via personal check or debit card?
- Are you using joint or separate checking accounts? If joint, have you discussed how you will manage the account?
- Do you have overdraft protection for your checking accounts just in case?
- Are you prepared for recurring, but not monthly expenses such as tuition payments, car and home insurance?

## Financial challenges:

- Do you have money saved in case of financial emergency?
- Have you considered asking your Sailor to sign a pre-authorization form with Navy Marine Corps Relief Society if your savings are minimal?
- Are you an authorized user of your Sailor's myPay account?

## Taxes:

- Will your Sailor be deployed during the tax season? If you file jointly you'll need to get a Special Power of Attorney for filing taxes or depositing the refund.
- Do you need an extension of the filing deadline?
- Do you need to file state income tax returns? You can contact the Internal Revenue Service at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) for more information

## Financial goals:

- If you have credit card balances are you working to pay it off?
- Have you and your Sailor discussed financial goals? Are you saving for emergencies, a new car, a house, a vacation?
- Is your Sailor enrolled in the Thrift Savings Plan?

## Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act

The Service Members' Civil Relief Act (SCRA) is a law that protects service members on active duty. Major provisions include:

- Termination of Residential Leases. This allows individuals to break a lease when they go onto active duty.



if the lease was entered into before going onto active duty. Additionally, the act allows a servicemember to terminate a residential lease entered into while in the military, if the member receives permanent change of station (PCS) orders, or orders to deploy for a period of not less than 90 days.

- **Automobile Leases.** If a member enters into an automobile lease before going on active duty, the member may request termination of the lease when he/she goes onto active duty. However, for this to apply, the active duty must be for at least 180 continuous days. Military members making a permanent change of station (PCS) move, or who deploy for 180 days or longer may terminate such leases.
- **Evictions from Leased Housing.** Service members may seek protection from eviction under SCRA. The rented/leased property must be occupied by the service member or his/her dependents and the rent cannot exceed a certain amount that is adjusted each year. The service member or dependent who has received notice of an eviction must submit a request to the court for protection under the SCRA. If the court finds that the service member's military duties have materially affected his ability to pay his rent in a timely manner, the judge may order a stay, postponement of the eviction proceeding, for up to three months or make any other "just" order.
- **Installment Contracts.** The SCRA gives certain protections against repossessions for installment contracts. If the contract was entered into before going on active duty and at least one payment was made before that time, the creditor cannot repossess the property, while the member is on active duty, nor can they terminate the contract for breach, without a court order.

- **6% Interest Rate.** If a service member's military obligation has affected his/her ability to pay on financial obligations such as credit cards, loans, mortgages, etc., the service member can have his/her interest rate capped at 6% for the duration of the service member's military obligation. Qualifying debts are debts that were incurred by the service member, or the service member and their spouse, jointly, before coming on active duty. Debts entered into after going on active duty are not so protected.
- **Court Proceedings.** If a service member is a defendant in a civil court proceeding, the court may grant a 90-day delay in the proceedings. The provision applies to civil lawsuits, suits for paternity, child custody suits, and bankruptcy debtor/creditor meetings, and administrative proceedings.
- **Enforcement of Obligations, Liabilities, Taxes.** A service member or dependent may, at any time during his/her military service, or within 6 months thereafter, apply to a court for relief of any obligation or liability incurred by the service member or dependent prior to active duty or in respect to any tax or assessment whether falling during or prior to the service member's active military service. The court may grant stays of enforcement during which time no fine or penalty can accrue.

Additionally, the act prevents service members from a form of double taxation that can occur when they have a spouse who works and is taxed in a state other than the state in which they maintain their permanent legal residence. The law prevents states from using the income earned by a service member in determining the spouse's tax rate when they do not maintain their permanent legal residence in that state.

## Your Home

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If something is going to go wrong during a deployment, most military spouses say it will involve the house or the car. Have your Sailor do as much preventive maintenance as possible. Make sure you have adequate insurance to cover the big things that can go wrong. Homeowners, rental, flood and car insurance can't eliminate every loss you might have, but they can make recovering from major losses easier.

Preplan where you will go in case you are required to evacuate your home during a disaster. Both you and your spouse will feel better knowing you have a plan and a place to go during a disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake. Create an emergency preparedness kit. A basic kit includes:

- Flashlights or battery-powered lanterns and extra batteries and bulbs.
- First aid kit with any medications family members routinely take.
- Water — one gallon per family member. Store enough for five days.
- Food — nonperishable foods that don't need to be cooked or refrigerated. Store enough for five days. Don't forget food/water for pets.
- Portable radio and extra batteries.

## “Honey Do List”

Although your Sailor has many things to do before they deploy ensure they complete routine maintenance and show you how to handle minor repairs. Create a “honey do list” of items that must be done before deployment. If you're in the middle of a renovation project try to complete it or at least make it usable. Washing dishes in the bathroom because the kitchen is being remodeled isn't much of a problem for a few days, but it can become a major aggravation after a few months.

Your spouse probably does a lot of routine maintenance around the house. Ask them to show you, or to write down, step by step instructions so you know how to do routine tasks such as:

- Change the air conditioner/furnace filter.
- Change the water filter.
- Start the lawnmower, put gas and oil into it.
- Reverse ceiling fans.
- Vacuum the refrigerator coils.
- Fix a leaking toilet.
- Reset circuit breakers.
- Deal with computer quirks.
- Hook up a new propane tank to the grill.
- Change smoke alarm/clock batteries.



### TOP TIP

Make sure you have renter's/homeowner's insurance. If you live in an area that is prone to flooding, make sure you have flood insurance too.



# 10 **Ten Tips for Staying Safe at Home**

Before your loved one leaves do a safety check of your house or apartment.

Most police departments will do a walk through of your home and make recommendations to improve safety for no charge. Tips include:

- 1.** Place telephones with emergency numbers by your bed and near the place you sit most often.
- 2.** Always lock all doors and windows.
- 3.** Use a peephole to identify visitors before opening your door.
- 4.** Do not hide spare keys outside your home.
- 5.** Do not provide your house keys to service people.
- 6.** Do not invite strangers into your home.
- 7.** Avoid telling others about the valuables in your home. Crush boxes of high value items such as televisions and computers when you set the trash out.
- 8.** Make sure there is good lighting around the place where you park.
- 9.** Install motion detector lights around your house instead of just leaving lights on at night. The lights coming on and turning off attract the attention of neighbors. Install these lights at least 8 feet above the ground so they are more difficult to disable.
- 10.** If you have shrubs and bushes, select ones with thorns to deter potential intruders from hiding in them.



# Emergency Preparedness

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While dealing with an emergency is challenging when you are with family, it is even more of a challenge when you're alone.

## Service Member Casualty

If a service member is injured, gravely ill, killed or missing, primary next of kin will be notified by a uniformed service member and typically, a chaplain. Notifications are made in person. Primary next of kin are those individuals identified by the service member on Emergency Data Form or "page two" of a service member's personnel record. That is why it is so important to ensure the information on the page two is always current. If a family member is going out of the area for an extended time period during the deployment it is a good idea to alert the command ombudsman and provide temporary contact information.

## Disaster Preparedness

It may seem like an oxymoron, but being prepared for possible emergencies can provide some peace of mind.

- Make sure you have insurance for your property. If you rent or live in military housing get renters' insurance.
- Have a designated person to contact out of state so that if you and loved ones can each call that person and "check-in". This is especially important if communication is limited and you are physically separated.
- Have an emergency plan that includes evacuation routes and supplies.

When preparing for a possible emergency situation, it's best to think first about the basics of survival:

- Fresh water.
- Food.
- Clean air.
- Warmth.



Put together the following items and store in an easily accessible location:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days.
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food).
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- First aid kit.
- Family documents such as insurance policies and bank account records in a waterproof container.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- Prescription medications and glasses.
- Infant formula and diapers.
- Pet food.
- Cash.

- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person.
- Change of clothing.
- Matches in a waterproof container.
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items.
- Paper products — cups, plates and plastic utensils.

For more information about emergency preparation go to

[www.cnic.navy.mil/cnic\\_hq\\_site/OpPrepare/index.htm](http://www.cnic.navy.mil/cnic_hq_site/OpPrepare/index.htm).



# Communication

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## OPSEC

Operation Security or OPSEC is keeping potential adversaries from discovering sensitive Department of Defense information. As the name suggests, it protects US operations — planned, in progress and those completed. Success depends on secrecy and surprise, so the military can accomplish the mission more quickly and with less risk. Enemies of freedom want this information, and they see Sailors and their families as potential information sources.

Types of sensitive information:

- Unit mission or the number of personnel assigned.
- Locations and times of deployments.
- Unit morale or personnel problems.
- Security procedures.
- Troop movement.
- Military intentions, capabilities or operations.

Don't:

- Talk about sensitive information in public settings such as the club, commissary, Navy Exchange or in the community.
- Talk about sensitive information over the telephone.
- Post pictures or information on web sites or blogs.
- Include sensitive information in e-mails or attachments.
- Write about sensitive information in newsletters or blogs.
- Neglect to shred excess paper involving information on operations.
- Try to talk around classified information — it is extremely difficult to out-smart experienced intelligence analysts.

## Stay Connected

Communication can be challenging during an IA deployment because your Sailor may not be near telephones or computers. Mail service can take weeks at times. Don't let that deter you. Any Sailor will tell you there is not a better day brightener than hearing from loved ones back home.

No news is often good news. It means your Sailor is hard at work. Know that if your loved one is ever seriously injured or missing from duty, a uniformed Navy representative with ID will contact you in person to inform you of their status. Beware of scams claiming your sailor is injured and asking you for personal information about your Sailor over the phone or by email.

## Letters

Letters, while taking longer to receive, are a more personal way to communicate. Many couples save their "love letters" from a deployment. Not many save e-mails. It's a good idea to number letters as they don't always arrive in the order they are written.

Ensure you have your Sailor's full mailing address. Create a "mail kit" with cards, wonderful stationary, pens, sticker, stamps, etc. to make letter writing easy and enjoyable.



Letters don't have to be long. Don't worry about grammar or spelling. Write letters about your daily existence, your plans for the future, and your thoughts and feelings to help maintain your emotional connection and make it easier to reunite at homecoming.



## E-mail

Quick and easy, e-mail is great for staying in touch. Discuss e-mail expectations prior to deploying:

- Will e-mail be readily available?  
(Note: Because of mission priority and location, some e-mail systems may be intermittently disrupted.)
- If so, how often will you send e-mails?
- What address do you use?

E-mail is not a great way to communicate when you're angry or upset. If you really have a need to get your feelings off your chest, go ahead and write the e-mail, but save it for 24 hours and reread before you send. It's usually best to communicate strong feelings over the phone when you can't do it in person. Also, remember, e-mails are not confidential. They may be seen by others. Be careful what you write.

## Postal Service Announces Military Discount

The U.S. Postal Service is rolling out a new, larger flat-rate box features — for the first time in Postal Service history — a military discount for those mailing to APO and FPO addresses. Regardless of how much they weigh, the boxes cost \$12.95 to mail for the general public, and \$10.95 if mailed to an APO or FPO address, postal officials said. The boxes themselves are free.

For more information visit [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).

## Care Packages

Who doesn't like to receive a present in the mail? Care packages are presents from home, but that doesn't mean a deployed Sailor cannot send a package to loved ones back home! While most items Sailors need are provided to them, items that make their life more comfortable are not. Moms, grandmothers, church groups and friends often enjoy sending care packages to service members as they welcome the opportunity to show support.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) offers free packing materials to families of military members deployed overseas. Call (800) 610-8734 Press "1" (For English) Press "1" Again (For Operator) Ask for the "CAREKIT04". They do not provide free postage.

A flat-rate box with a military discount for those mailing to APO and FPO addresses is also available. Regardless of how much they weigh, the boxes cost \$12.95 to mail for the general public, and \$10.95 if mailed to an APO or FPO address, postal officials said. The boxes themselves are free. More information is available at [www.usps.com/supportingourtroops](http://www.usps.com/supportingourtroops).



## Care package items may include:

- CDs
- Hand sanitizers
- Sunglasses
- Telephone calling cards
- Shampoo
- Sunscreen
- Bug repellent
- Tooth paste/mouth wash
- Gum
- Books/reading material
- Underwear/T-shirts
- Packaged candy/cookies

## Creative Care Packages

Running out of creative ideas to send in care packages? Try some of these “theme” pack ideas:

### Call Home (or write) Pack

- Note paper and colorful pens
- Phone cards
- Address labels
- Address book
- Pre-addressed special occasion cards
- Love letters from your courting days



### Beach Party Pack

- Flip-flops
- Sunglasses
- “Blow-Up” beach toys
- Sunscreen
- Bathing suit
- Beach towel

### Night @ the Movies Pack

- DVDs
- Popcorn
- Movie candy
- Nachos supplies
- Homemade poster

### Second Childhood Pack

- Yoyo
- Old Maid cards/Go Fish cards
- Silly Putty
- Silly String
- Marbles
- Balloons
- “Kid Meal” toys



### “Whine” & Cheese Pack

- Tape of you/ kids whining
- Assortment of cheeses
- Assortment of sausages
- Assortment of crackers

### Good Sport Pack

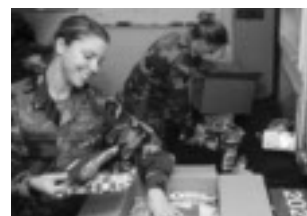
- Sports magazines
- Video of a local game or your kid’s games
- Favorite team T-shirt or cap
- Popcorn and peanuts
- Pennants
- Autograph from a favorite star

### Our Morning Coffee Pack

- Favorite coffee blend
- All the goodies to add... creamer, sugar, flavors, etc
- A great mug
- “Tasty Cake” coffee cakes
- Biscotti
- A picture of you in PJs
- A picture of kids at breakfast table

### Coming Home Pack

- Picture of your new outfit
- Your favorite perfume or cologne
- A map of how to get home from the airport
- A banner
- A picture of the welcome home decorations
- A menu



## Telephone Calls

Telephone calls can bring the greatest emotional highs as well as lows. It's wonderful to hear your loved ones voice and talk in the here and now, but sadness can briefly overwhelm you when you hang up and realize how much you miss your loved one. Make the most of your telephone conversations:

- Keep a written list of things you want to talk about.
- Try to stay positive and upbeat. At least try to end each call on a positive note.
- Talk about your daily activities to make it easier to reconnect at homecoming.
- Suggest to older children that they keep a list of things to tell their parent when they call.
- If you share bad news make sure someone is available to provide emotional support to your loved one.
- Talk about plans for homecoming and future activities.
- Discuss problems and solutions, but don't spend the entire call talking about them.
- Keep in mind that it may be difficult for your Sailor to have a completely private phone call.
- Tell your loved one you love them and appreciate their sacrifices.



## Pictures, Video Recordings and Video Teleconferencing

While letters and e-mails are nice, there is nothing better than seeing your Sailor. If your loved one has access to a DVD player make recordings of life at home and ask them to do the same for you. Realize that privacy is at a premium so be discreet when sending videos and pictures.

Send pictures of yourself, family members, any new items you purchase or the new furniture arrangement. If you have children or are an expectant parent pictures are even more important as children grow and change quickly.

If you have the opportunity to do video teleconferencing with your Sailor it might be helpful to jot down a few items you'd like to talk about, have the children sing a song or do a family skit. It's not so much what you say, but the fact that you cared to get dressed up and put effort into brightening your loved one's day that will be remembered.

# Your Emotions

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Sailors have been deploying and their loved ones have awaited their return over the centuries, but waiting can be hard. It's not just day-to-day chores and responsibilities that you must handle on your own, but the roller coaster of emotions with which you have to deal. You're proud of your Sailor, but angry they must deploy. You may worry that you can't handle the additional responsibilities, yet are confident you can. You fear for your loved one's safety and your heart aches for their return.

## Emotional Ups and Downs of Deployment

Much research has been done to understand the common feelings Sailors and their families experience when separated from each other due to a military assignment. You may experience similar feelings or your reactions may be very different. There is no such thing as a "right" or "wrong" feeling. If you find you're feelings are getting in the way of you doing the things you need to do — caring for children, going to work or school, taking care of the house — don't hesitate to contact your Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain or Military One Source for assistance. Their numbers are listed in the back of this handbook.

## Anticipation of Loss

Anticipating loss occurs before deployment. It's a time of tension and confusing emotions. For IA deployments it seems like this phase is a never-ending series of command checkout actions required to deploy overseas.

You may be angry and resentful of the hours required to get ready for departure. You may or may not talk about your fear for your Sailor's safety. Service members feel guilty that they are leaving their families. Arguments and bickering are common. Although irritating, it can be a way for you to distance emotionally in preparation for the separation.

## Detachment and Withdrawal

The day or two before deployment can be difficult. You stop sharing thoughts and feelings with each other. This is a natural response as separation is imminent. Although physically together, you are separated emotionally. This can be especially difficult if it is seen as rejection rather than as a reaction to trying circumstances. Often non-deploying spouses think, "If you have to go, go." And Sailors think, "Let's get on with it!"

## Emotional Disorganization

Once your Sailor leaves you may feel an initial sense of relief followed by guilt. You may feel disorganized, depressed, or restless. Old routines have been disrupted and new ones not yet established. It's not unusual to feel overwhelmed as you face total responsibility for family affairs. Give yourself a few weeks, and you'll begin to feel more in control.



### TOP TIP

Acknowledge your feelings. Respect your feelings. Don't let them overwhelm you. Get help if needed



## How's Your Attitude?

While feelings can be difficult to control, it is easier to manage your thoughts and attitude towards this IA assignment. Attitude is the state of mind with which you approach a situation. Why is your attitude important? It affects how you look, what you say and what you do. It affects how you feel both physically and emotionally. It largely affects how successful you are in achieving your purpose in life. While talent is helpful and knowledge is essential, the most important key to success in any endeavor is your state of mind.

With an IA assignment or anything in life you have a choice to make. You can apply a positive attitude and make the best of a situation or you can apply a negative attitude, withdraw and complain.

Approaching life with a positive attitude is healthier for you and those around you. Make a list of goals you can achieve during this separation and what steps you need to take to reach them. Set mini goals for every day, next week and next month. Completion of goals gives you a sense of satisfaction and confidence to achieve more.

Learn to recognize when you are having negative thoughts, self-doubts or feeling overwhelmed. Your body sends signals. You may have a hard time sleeping, eat too much or too little, have a short attention span, are jumpy, grouchy or irritable. Pay attention to your body's signals and nip negativity before it impacts you.

## Recovery

At some point during the deployment, new routines are established. You feel more comfortable with the reorganization of roles and responsibilities. New sources of support and a new sense of independence and freedom are developed.

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*For it was not into my ear you whispered,  
but into my heart. It was not my lips you  
kissed, but my soul.*

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~Judy Garland





## Proven Stress Busters

Even if you've experienced deployment before you may be uneasy about an IA deployment. IA deployments are often longer, there is the element of fear and danger, and you may feel isolated from friends who are not sharing the same experiences. Expect stress and plan for it.

- **Do something you enjoy.** At least once per week — preferably daily — do something fun. It may be something as simple as reading a book or listening to music.
- **Get involved.** Work, go to church services, participate in organized volunteer opportunities, take classes, do more with your children.
- **Stay active.** Exercise is the body's natural stress reducer. Ride your bike, go to the gym, take the kids and dog for a walk. Get moving!
- **Avoid using drugs, alcohol and nicotine.** While they dull the perception of stress, they don't eliminate it.
- **Accept that you can't control everything.** You can control your reaction. Let your kids wear mismatched outfits. So the house isn't spotless. You have to renegotiate a deadline at work. You didn't get an e-mail or letter today.
- **Laugh.** Hang out with people who are fun. Watch comedies. Read the comic pages. Listen to and tell jokes.

- **Celebrate success.** Focus on what you're doing right. Everyone makes mistakes. Learn from them and move on. Use positive self-talk.

- **Allow yourself to worry and feel sad.** However, allow only fifteen to thirty minutes per day. Schedule worry time if necessary. That way when negative feelings creep up during the day you can say to yourself, "I'll have time to think about that later."

- **Ask for help when you need it.** Friends, family, colleagues care about you. Everyone can use a hand at times.

Remember, it is normal to feel a certain amount of stress or worry whenever you face a new situation. If your feelings prevent you from managing your day-to-day responsibilities get help. Contact your Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain, or Military OneSource.

# Your Family

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To enable you and your loved one to grow together emotionally even though you are physically apart requires commitment and communication.

## Keep Your Relationship Strong

Successful marriages don't just happen — they require constant commitment. Military couples who have successful relationships offer the following suggestions for keeping your relationship strong:

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*You can kiss your family and friends  
good-bye and put miles between you,  
but at the same time you carry them  
with you in your heart, your mind, your  
stomach, because you do not just live in  
a world but a world lives in you.*

~ Frederick Buechner

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- **Military life and marriage are voluntary choices.** Couples who keep this fact in mind are better able to deal with resentment that may occur when they feel they lack control of their circumstances.
- **A team approach.** Successful couples embrace the military as their chosen lifestyle, not just the job of the service member. They believe success requires active engagement of both partners.
- **Mutual respect and appreciation.** The “jobs” of both the military member and the military spouse are difficult and challenging and successful couples appreciate that and are committed to the success of each other.
- **A realistic perspective of military life.** Successful couples see their military journey as one chapter of their life together — even for those who make the military a career. Successful couples accept the benefits and challenges of military life and maintain a realistic perspective of their time as a military family.

- **A desire to be prepared.** Successful military couples took marriage preparation seriously from the beginning and continue to take advantage of marriage retreats, parenting programs, deployment briefings and other programs to strengthen their relationship and prepare for challenges together.
- **A network of friends.** Support through individual and joint friends helps provide support for the couple, particularly during deployments. Individual and joint friendships help provide support particularly during deployments.
- **Trust in each other.** Trust is essential to a successful relationship. It is nurtured when you are together and apart.
- **Frequent, honest communication.** While frequent communication may be difficult during an IA deployment, technological advances have made it easier. An important aspect of communication is to understand the other person and attempt to convey thoughts and feelings in a way the other partner will hear and appreciate.

## Children and Deployment



Don't assume your child is aware and understands that a parent is deploying. Be sure to tell your child about the upcoming deployment. Reassure them that they will be cared for while mom or dad is away. Encourage them to ask any questions they might have.

Allow children to miss their parent and to feel sad about their absence. Encourage communication with your child and allow them to express any feelings they may have. Children are often confused, angry, worried and feel insecure. It is important for you to try to maintain your child's daily routine and be consistent in discipline.

Most Navy kids are resilient and will bounce back. If your child is struggling, don't hesitate to contact your child's school counselor, the Fleet and Family Support Center, a chaplain or Military One Source for assistance.



# Children and Deployment

Age	What to Expect	Ways to Help
Infants & Toddlers 	They may seem fussier, clingy, may eat less and have trouble sleeping.	Have your spouse/child's caregiver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Record video/audio taped stories.</li> <li>— Post pictures of deployed parent.</li> <li>— Provide extra hugs and cuddles.</li> <li>— Maintain routine.</li> <li>— Take care of themselves to be better able to care for children.</li> </ul>
Preschoolers	May feel their behavior caused their parent to leave.  May become more fearful/irritable.  May regress in potty training/thumb sucking/etc.  May have trouble sleeping.	Have your spouse/child's caregiver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Record video/audio taped stories.</li> <li>— Create a waterproof photo album or picture book of deployed parent and child doing things together.</li> <li>— Provide extra hugs and cuddles.</li> <li>— Maintain routine.</li> <li>— Move your child back to their bed a few weeks before your expected return. Don't get too concerned if your child wants to sleep in mom and dad's bed while you're gone. It often provides a sense of security.</li> </ul>
School-age 	May see a decline in school performance.  More irritable or moody.  May worry about deployed parent's safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Have family discussion before deployment.</li> <li>— Involve teachers, church, neighbors. Enroll in Big Brother/Sister Program.</li> <li>— Communicate regularly.</li> <li>— Reassure about safety training/drills/equipment.</li> <li>— Play games via email and regular mail.</li> </ul> Have your spouse/child's caregiver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Schedule fun activities.</li> <li>— Help child compile care packages to send to deployed parent.</li> <li>— Limit viewing of TV news about the war.</li> <li>— Assist your child to send care packages, letters and cards to their parent and others serving.</li> </ul>
Teens	May be ambivalent.  May be moody/withdrawn.  May test rules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Communicate regularly.</li> <li>— Don't expect teen to take on your household responsibilities.</li> <li>— Ask spouse/caretaker to maintain rules, curfews and discipline as much as possible.</li> </ul>

# Deployment Activities for Kids

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The following activities might help your child with deployment by increasing communication, building pride in the Navy lifestyle and tracking time.

## Command Ball Cap, T-shirt, Jacket, etc.

1. These items can be given to children to wear while separated from the deployed parent.
2. School-age children wear them as a sign of pride in the deployed parent and as a way to feel closer to that parent.

## Deployment “Grab-Bag”

1. Fill any type of bag with scraps of paper that have activities written on them, such as, go to the zoo, whisper all day, read a book, take a walk, etc.
2. Children can glue them to their calendar page, and mail them to the deployed parent or share them upon their return.

## Deployment Journal

1. This can be any type of notebook, scrapbook, diary, etc., used by the child or parent to write letters, thoughts, or to share feelings with one another.
2. Adding memorabilia such as a baseball game ticket, ballet program, postcard, etc., along with journaling thoughts or feelings at the time, can make the event come alive. Remembering these events and special occasions help make the deployed parent feel more involved.
3. This is especially useful if mail is going to be very slow or if there will be no mail (such as some submarine deployments).

## Calendar Pages

1. This can be a purchased calendar, calendar pages created on a computer, or hand drawn pages.
2. Mark off the passing days of a deployment.
3. Use the calendar as a journal to write in daily activities.
4. Each page can be mailed or reviewed at the end of the deployment.

## Paper Chain

1. This chain is made with strips of construction paper, glued into cylinder shapes and linked together.
2. Children tear off a “link” for each day (or one for each week) until Homecoming Day when the last “link” is left. This assists children in marking the passing of time.
3. The paper chain can also be used as a journal. As each “link” is removed, the children can write something that happened that day (or week) to be mailed to the deployed parent or shared upon their return.
4. Or, each day/week, a link can be added

to build a chain, including an activity done during that day/week, written on the link. When the sailor returns, they can read what was accomplished during the deployment.



## Holiday Post Card Mobile

1. The deployed parent will send the child post cards to be colored.
2. These can be from our holiday post card activity, cut out of a coloring book, or drawn by a parent.
3. They can show a holiday theme or anything of special significance to the parent and child.
4. When the child receives the picture, he/she colors it, gets help enclosing it in clear plastic (contact paper works great!), and punches a small hole in it.
5. Thread a ribbon or string through the hole and attach it to pipe cleaners or popsicle sticks to make into the shape of a mobile to be hung in the child's room or somewhere the child will see it frequently.
6. If the mail will be unreliable, the pictures can all be completed by the deploying parent and left with the parent/caregiver at home with the instructions of when to give each picture.

## Decorated Pillowcase

1. A pair of old pillowcases can be used for the project. The deploying parent will decorate one for each child and the child/children will decorate one for the deploying parent.
2. The spouse can even decorate the reverse side for the deploying spouse.
3. Be sure to use permanent markers so the pillowcase can be washed.

## Map

1. This is used by the child during the deployment to "follow" the ship throughout the world.
2. Give the child markers and stickers to keep track of the ship/unit.

## Star Connection

1. Parents and child can work together to decorate a construction paper star for each of them before the deployment.
2. Spend time together looking at the stars in the night sky talking about being able to look at the same stars while they are separated.
3. They can then hang their decorated star somewhere they will see it often to remind themselves of one another.

## Flower Petals

1. This helps children track time during a deployment.
2. Parent spends time with their child decorating a Popsicle stick to look like a flower stem.
3. Cut out 6 "petals" from construction paper, which the parent takes with them on deployment.
4. Each month the parent writes a small message on a petal and sends it to the child.
5. As the child receives the petals, they glue them to the stem. When the flower is completed it is time for homecoming.



# 10 Ten Ways To Support Your Sailor During an IA Assignment

Family members who have supported their Sailor through an IA assignment offer the following suggestions:

- 1. Get organized** — The command will provide a checklist of items the Navy requires that must be done before your Sailor deploys. You can also create a checklist of items that need to be done to make this separation easier for you and your children. Go to [www.ffsp.navy.mil](http://www.ffsp.navy.mil) and click on “deployment checklists” to get started.
- 2. Stay positive** — Long separations can seem unbearable. However, they do provide the opportunity for personal growth. Bolster each other’s confidence that you can make it through the separation.
- 3. Manage the home front** — Your Sailor will be able to focus on the mission and stay safer by knowing you can handle daily responsibilities such as finances, your home and vehicle.
- 4. Discuss solutions** — Invariably challenges will arise while you are separated. Try not to focus on problems, but identify possible solutions to problems.
- 5. Communicate** — Write letters, e-mail, send pictures and care packages. Communicate regularly. Tell funny stories; send cartoons, forward uplifting quotes. Maintain your connection.
- 6. Take care of yourself** — Eat healthily. Exercise. Get plenty of rest. Stay physically and emotionally strong. Knowing you are healthy reduces your Sailor’s worries.
- 7. Care for your children** — Single parenting while your Sailor is deployed is challenging, but knowing the children are being well cared for reduces your Sailor’s worries. This doesn’t mean you should never go out and have fun. Quite the contrary. It’s important to take time for yourself. Your children need a break from you occasionally, too! Locate a wonderful child care provider and take a break from single parenting at least a few hours each week.
- 8. Tell your Sailor you love them** — Absence really does make the heart grow fonder. Make a point to tell your Sailor you love them every chance you get. Try to limit venting your frustrations so your Sailor looks forward to his/her communications with you.
- 9. Watch for signs of stress** — You know your Sailor better than anyone else in the world. Pay attention to signs of stress while deployed or upon returning from an IA assignment. Although everyone has an off day or two, if your Sailor consistently seems moody, angry or depressed suggest they talk with a chaplain, contact Military OneSource, Fleet and Family Support Center or the Veterans Administration. Contact information is at the end of this booklet.
- 10. Get help when you need it** — Supporting your Sailor, especially during an IA assignment in a combat zone, is challenging. The Navy knows this and has a number of programs and services to assist you. Don’t let situations get out of control. Get help to prevent minor problems from becoming major ones.



# R&R Leave

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Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave is chargeable leave available to give service members rest from a combat zone. There are two types of R&R leave:

1. A four day pass to safe locations near the theater of operations such as Camp Al Saliyah, Qatar.
2. A fifteen day pass out of the theater of operations.

R&R leave is a privilege, not an entitlement. Service members must be in theater for at least sixty days before they are allowed R&R leave. R&R leave within the last sixty days of deployment is strongly discouraged.

Travel time to and from R&R leave is not charged as leave. Your Sailor's command is not allowed to have more than ten percent of their personnel away at any time which may impact when your Sailor can take leave. Air travel is provided to the commercial airport closest to the R&R traveler's leave address. Leave begins to be charged the day after your Sailor arrives at the commercial airport closest to his/her leave address. Only one fifteen day trip will be authorized in a twelve month period.

## R&R Leave Expectations

Families and Sailors often view R&R leave almost as a "honeymoon period", but expectations and reality often don't mesh. You want to make the most of the time together, but there are some barriers that can be a challenge:

- Sailors generally return exhausted after traveling for twenty-four hours or more.
- If you have children their needs may take precedence over the needs of parents.
- Extended family members want to share this time together.
- Often R&R leave comes during non-vacation time for the IA's family — children are in school and the spouse must continue to work.
- Some IA Sailors don't really get away from their responsibilities as they continue to receive phone calls and e-mails from work.
- Towards the end of the R&R leave period your Sailor may begin to refocus on returning back to the job so they separate emotionally. Similarly, you also may begin to distance yourself emotionally to prepare for the rest of the time apart.



## R&R Leave Tips

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R&R leave can be a wonderful time together for you and your spouse. Plan for R&R leave just as you planned for deployment and you will plan for homecoming:

- Be aware of the challenges associated with R&R leave.
- Allow time for your Sailor to rest.
- “Pace” activities. Everyday does not have to be filled to the brim.
- If you have children, be sensitive to their needs. Explain to them that their parent will be home temporarily and that they must return to duty. Expect some attention-getting behavior when your Sailor is home and some acting out behaviors as your Sailor prepares to leave. Your children may respond to their parent’s departure very similarly to the way they did initially.
- Limit the honey-do list.
- Be protective of your time together.

Each family is unique. Talk with your spouse and be honest with your feelings about how you want to spend the time together. Don’t make the mistake of doing what you think your Sailor will want.



### Extended Time Away

Many Navy spouses choose to go back home to live during a deployment or to go for an extended visit. If you’re able to stay with parents or other family members during the deployment, it’s a great way to save money by not having to pay household expenses. If you have young children, or if your children are out of school, it’s also a great way for them to get to know grandparents and other family members better.

If you are planning to stay with family during the deployment, note that this is not covered in the military clause of most leases. There may be hefty financial penalties involved in breaking your lease. Check with your PSD to see if your orders will allow you to break your lease without penalty or if you will be authorized to move at Government expense.

When away from your house for several days or several weeks:

- Notify your Command Ombudsman/ NOSC/parent command with your contact address, telephone number, etc.
- If possible, have your telephone calls forwarded.
- Stop your newspaper and forward your mail.
- Have a plan in place to have the grass mowed or snow shoveled.
- Use a timer for lights.
- If you have a trusted neighbor tell them when you are going to be away and provide contact information.
- Ask your local police to check your home periodically.
- Contact TRICARE health care system at [www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil) when you’re away from home for more than thirty days to ensure you maintain coverage.

## Free Space “A” Flights for Families of Deployed

Spouses and children of personnel deployed 120 days or longer can use military transport in CONUS, to/from CONUS, and within/between theater, provided they have a verification letter from the military member’s commander. Family members, regardless of where they are based, may travel unaccompanied for unlimited times during the deployment when seats are available. Children under the age of 18 need an eligible parent or legal guardian to travel with them.

The travel option is also available to Guard and Reserve families, as well as Navy families whose military sponsor is assigned to a deployed ship with PCS orders. While many may use the privilege to visit parents and grandparents, the guidelines do not restrict travel to home of record or family-based visits. That makes the policy more equitable and useful, since many people’s extended families may not live in their home of record. In addition, some families may find help and encouragement in a visit to friends at a previous base, or through a low-cost vacation getaway.

Space A, which is based on availability, often involves waiting to gain space on a flight (and the government won’t cover meals, lodging or other costs associated with that). Even so, families — especially those with children — could find this to be a real boost to their travel budget. A family of four based on the West Coast who wants to travel to the East Coast to stay with grandparents for a few weeks could potentially save up to a few thousand dollars in airline tickets. Of course, there’s no guarantee with Space “A” flights, but for those who can take the time, the opportunity for free flights can be not only a morale-booster, but also a money-saver.



# 10 Ten Ways to Stay Busy During an IA Assignment

Do not put your life “on hold” until your Sailor returns. You may grow to resent your Sailor. Additionally, you’ll have more interesting conversations and send more entertaining letters and e-mails if you are active and involved during your separation. Finally, time goes by faster when you’re busy.

- 1.** Create a list — Before your Sailor even leaves create a list of things to do. If you have children include plans for them. Get your calendar out and schedule as many of these activities as you can.
- 2.** Join a Family Readiness Group — Get involved with a Family Readiness Group. Join an Army, Air Force or Marine Corps sponsored group if you don’t live near a Navy base. Start, or join a group of other IA spouses. Find a virtual group on the Internet. This is a great way to meet other military spouses, to feel “understood” and to be supported during your Sailor’s absence.
- 3.** Work — If you already have a job, this is a great time to focus on working toward career goals. If you do not have a job, but would like one, contact your local Fleet and Family Support Center as they can help you assess your skills, create a resume, do a job search and prepare for interviews — all at no cost!
- 4.** Volunteer — It can be easy to slip into self-pity and sadness when your Sailor is gone, but if you reach out to help others you will constantly be reminded of your good fortune. Assist battered spouses, deliver meals to the elderly, deliver books to patients in the hospital, care for homeless kittens and puppies, or help disaster victims rebuild their lives.
- 5.** Be more involved at church — Contact your minister or chaplain and let them know you’d like to be more involved. You can teach classes, greet worshipers, staff the nursery, provide readings during the service, and participate in study groups. While you give you’ll also receive support.
- 6.** Get fit — While your Sailor is deployed is the perfect time to get into the best shape of your life. Work out everyday. Join a gym. Get a personal trainer. Take aerobic, Pilates, yoga classes. Dazzle your Sailor upon their return!
- 7.** Redecorate — Whether it’s an extreme makeover or simply painting and rearranging furniture, sprucing up your house or apartment can be very satisfying. Watch home decorating channels. Wander through home furnishing departments. Review decorating books and magazines to create a home fit for a queen or king for you and your Sailor.
- 8.** Travel — Visit family, a college room mate or your best friend from school.
- 9.** Add to your education — Take a class or complete a degree. Many Navy family members say it’s easier to study when their Sailor is deployed.
- 10.** Have fun — Try to do something you enjoy everyday as time flies when you’re having fun. It may be something as simple as chatting on the phone with a friend, surfing the web, reading a book or taking a walk or something as elaborate as planning a trip or creating a masterpiece.

# Homecoming

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One of the best aspects of Navy life is Navy homecomings. Absence really can make the heart grow fonder! Homecomings are different after an IA assignment. Rather than returning with a squadron or ship, IA Sailors generally come back by themselves, often to little fanfare. Some Sailors say this is a bit of a let down, and others are happy not to have to deal with the hoopla. You'll need to get a sense from your Sailor what their individual preferences are for celebrating homecoming.

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*A great marriage is not when the 'perfect couple' comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.*  
~Dave Meurer

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## Expectations

Reunion is an exciting time however; what you plan and the realism of what actually occurs can sometimes be very different. Once your Sailor is back in the states, there is a significant demobilization process including turning in gear, a physical exam, mental health screening and check in with various base departments. Your Sailor will usually receive a period of leave before returning to full duty. Like all separation reunions, you will encounter a period of reintegration where roles and relationships are reshaped.

Returning home after being in a war zone is a process not a single event. Your Sailor may have difficulty adjusting to life after war. Your life will not be exactly as it was before your Sailor's deployment as you both have had different experiences. You may notice changes in your Sailor immediately or it may be three or four months before they appear, or you may not notice any changes at all.

Your Sailor spent months in a "hyped-up" emotional state while in a war zone. Your Sailor may suffer a stress injury from their combat experience. They may be uncomfortable in large crowds and easily startled by loud noises. They may have trouble trusting anyone. If they witness the deaths of others during their IA assignment they may set up an emotional firewall and keep loved ones' at a distance as a way of protecting themselves from the pain of possibly losing a loved one.

They may not be willing to talk about their experiences while deployed. Don't pry and try not to be shocked by anything your Sailor may tell you. Let them know you'll be there for them.

They may have difficulty sleeping. They may have nightmares or flashbacks. They may drink or self-medicate to avoid feelings or thoughts associated with their IA tour. It may take weeks or months for some of these behaviors to occur.

As a family member you may be the first to become aware that your Sailor is experiencing symptoms of post traumatic stress. Post traumatic stress is a reaction to the extreme stress people encounter during threats of danger to themselves or others or the fear of death.

### **Tips for a Successful Homecoming**

- Be realistic. All of your homecoming fantasies may not occur.
- Communicate. Talk about your thoughts and feelings.
- Re-evaluate your financial goals.
- Be slow to criticize.
- Show appreciation for those who have supported you through this deployment.
- Talk with other IAs and their families as you are not the only one readjusting to homecoming.
- Get help if the challenges of returning home get worse instead of better.

Symptoms may include:

- Depression.
- Loss of interest in work/activities.
- Isolation.
- Anger.
- Sleep problems.
- Survivor guilt.
- Hyper alertness.
- Emotional distance from family.
- High risk behaviors.
- A negative self-image.
- Emotional numbing.
- Distrust of authority.
- Suicidal thoughts.

If you'd like to learn more about what to expect if your Sailor is returning from a combat zone, two helpful, inexpensive and easy to read books are:

1. *Down Range To Iraq and Back* by Bridget C. Cantrell, PH.D and Chuck Dean.
2. *Courage After Fire* by Keith Armstrong, LCSW, Suzanne Best, PH.D and Paula Domenici, PH.D.

Both books offer practical advice to service members and their families, are inexpensive and available from popular books sellers.

Contact a chaplain, Fleet and Family Support Center, Military OneSource or the Veterans Administration for more information or to get assistance for you and your Sailor.

## Children and Reunion

Reunion is a time of excitement, joy and readjustment. Younger children take their cues about homecoming from you, their caretaker. Older children may have similar feelings as you do. They will be excited, joyous and may feel anxious if they believe they did not live up to their deployed parent's expectations.

Often the parent who has been at home is reluctant to share the responsibility of parenting. It is important for children to see both parents in the caretaking role. It also allows the parent returning from a war zone to experience the innocence, intimacy and joy that caring for their children can provide.

Just as parents need time to reestablish relationships, so do children. It's best for the returning parent to initially not make drastic changes to their children's routine, rules and responsibilities. Children will likely go to the parent who has remained at home with them for the first few days upon their deployed parent's return for permission, questions and assistance.

If possible, plan a few days and have a family vacation at home. Do fun activities as a family. Limit house cleaning and chores to the essentials. Talk, play, listen and enjoy being a family again.

Duty nights can be challenging after an extended deployment as young children may worry that their parent has again left. Older children are usually delighted that their family is reunited even though they may, at times, resent the discipline enforced by having two parents at home.



### TOP TIP

At homecoming—talk, play, listen and enjoy being a family again.



# Help When You Need It

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It is possible you will have questions, concerns or a family emergency at some point during the deployment. There are some things you can do to prepare for an emergency such as:

- Have money saved for emergencies.
- Consider having your Sailor sign a pre-authorization form with Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society in case of financial emergency.
- Make sure your extended family members know your Sailor's rate/rank, command name and mailing address.
- Have a disaster preparedness plan and a place to meet/call after a disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake.
- Make sure you have a support system — people you can turn to for assistance.

The Navy knows that you may need assistance from time to time and has created a plethora of services available to assist you during deployment or anytime.

## Command Ombudsman

Ombudsmen are volunteers, appointed by the commanding officer, to serve as an information link between command leadership and Navy families. They are not professional counselors, but they are trained to listen to your questions or problems and to refer you to professionals who can help.

Most Ombudsmen publish a newsletter packed with information. Some also have a careline which is a recorded message that is regularly updated with news about your command, Family Readiness Group activities, and local military and community information. Parent command ombudsmen are directed to maintain contact with families on a regular basis. To facilitate this communication be sure your command ombudsman has your most current contact information.

Consider your command Ombudsman first when you have a question or concern. They can prevent frustration by pointing you in the right direction to get the information or help you need.

To locate your Ombudsmen, contact your local Fleet and Family Support Center. You can get their number by going to [www.ffsp.navy.mil](http://www.ffsp.navy.mil).

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*It is one of the beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.*

*~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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## American Red Cross

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

When you think of emergencies — big or small — you think of the American Red Cross. The Red Cross serves both civilian and military personnel. It sends communications on behalf of family members who are facing emergencies or other important events to members of the U.S. Armed Forces serving all over the world. These communications are delivered around-the-clock, seven days a week, 365 days per year.

When a Sailor is deployed it is possible that bad news will need to be relayed to them. When you need to tell your Sailor significant bad news such as an illness or a death of a family member it is important to use official channels such as the American Red Cross or the Command Ombudsman.

Do not send emergency information via e-mail or letter as most commands want families to use the American Red Cross for two reasons:

1. The American Red Cross staff verifies information to allow commands to make informed decisions about emergency leave.
2. Command Chaplain, Commanding Officer, Executive Officer or Command Master Chief provides the information to the Sailor and ensures support is available.

For any Red Cross message to be sent the following information is needed:

- The service members' name.
- Rank.
- Social security number.
- Duty station.

For an illness in the immediate family:

- Name.
- Illness.
- Relationship.
- Whether or not the person who is ill wants the service member notified.

For a death in the immediate family:

- Name of the deceased.
- Relationship.
- When and how death occurred.
- Is the sponsor's presence required or requested?

For birth announcements:

- Mother must personally notify sailor.

In addition to providing services to active duty personnel and their families, the Red Cross also serves members of the National Guard, the Reserves, and their families who reside in nearly every community in America.

Through offices all over the world, the Red Cross, in partnership with Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS), provides emergency financial assistance to those eligible when traveling and not near a military installation, after hours, or on days when NMCRS is not available.



## Chaplain

[www.anchordesk.navy.mil/HTM/ChaplainRoster.htm](http://www.anchordesk.navy.mil/HTM/ChaplainRoster.htm)

Chaplains play a vital role in helping their fellow sea-service personnel and family members during crucial moments in their lives. They are available 24/7 to provide spiritual guidance and help you “sort through” a variety of issues or concerns. For example, they provide moral support for young people away from home for the first time or deployed, offer support to individuals facing personal or emotional difficulties, and provide spiritual assistance to people from all walks of life.

Chaplains also provide specific programming through Chaplain Religious Enrichment Development Operation (CREDO) Spiritual Fitness Division (SFD) designed for IAs and their family members. CREDO SFD offers free weekend retreats and workshops for families, couples and individuals. There are ten CREDO SFDs located in fleet concentration areas. Please contact your local chaplain or command for more information.



Individuals often contact chaplains when they don't know where to turn for assistance. The availability and experience of chaplains enables them to be excellent resource persons. Chaplains live and work with the men and women in uniform. As an insider within the military system, their unique role allows them to:

- Make personal visits with military personnel and family members as needed.
- Provide information about various concerns and issues.
- Provide emotional and spiritual support throughout the deployment cycle, at home and in theatre.
- Educate commands about the concerns and needs of IAs and their families.

Many chaplains are trained counselors and they understand the military system. They will be able to refer you to military and local community resources that can help. In addition, chaplains can help individuals find local clergy and places of worship. Some commands have assigned chaplains. If your command doesn't have an assigned chaplain, contact the nearest military base and ask for the duty chaplain.

## Command Family Readiness Group

A Family Readiness Group (FRG) is a group of spouses sponsored by a command that coordinates fun and informational activities for members. In addition to spouses, some groups may also include parents, children, and fiancé as determined by the commanding officer.

Command Family Readiness Groups are called by a number of names:

- Family Support Group.
- Family Support Club.
- Friends and Family Support Group.
- Command Family Association.
- Spouse Group.

Family Readiness Groups may help:

- Prepare for deployments and homecoming.
- Provide family support during deployments or mobilization.
- Help families adjust to challenges and to assist one another in times of personal, unit, or area crises.

Some installations have created IA family support groups where you can meet other family members experiencing similar

assignments. Getting involved with a Family Readiness Group is a great way to get to know other families, to learn more about the Navy and to support your Sailor. To learn about groups contact your Command Ombudsman about groups contact your Command Ombudsman.



## **Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC)**

<http://www.ecrc.navy.mil>.

ECRC was established at Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) Little Creek, VA, under Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) to provide coordination and supervision of the training and equipping process.

ECRC assigned action officers (AOs) in order to provide a “go to” support link for IA Sailors and provisional units grouped by mission. ECRC AOs review specific mission and training pipelines and communicate directly with IA Sailors throughout the mobilization process to ensure that IAs are fully ready to deploy. AOs ensure the IA Sailor gets proactive answers to questions and provide a point of contact for information while Sailors are in training and in theater.

ECRC has Navy Liaison Officer (LNO) teams at Army training sites to further assist Sailors during their pre-deployment training. LNOs act as the primary liaison between the Army training cadre and the Sailors under training to ensure the accurate flow of information and rapid resolution of issues. LNOs update Sailor information used to support IA Sailors and family members during training and deployment. LNOs assist with berthing, pay issues, communications, scheduling, uniforms, transportation, documentation, surveys, database updates and informational archives

ECRC has in country detachments located in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan. These forward operating units receive, train, transport, track and redeploy IA Sailors. The Navy IA Support Units provide a clear window of visibility in every phase of the

IA Sailors’ mission, allowing ECRC to be a proactive advocate during every stage of an IA deployment. Exercising a robust reach back capability, the ECRC forward detachments have at their disposal the entire ECRC headquarters element and additional Navy resources to address any sailor or family issue that arises.

While it is understood that parent commands remain responsible for their IA Sailor and their Sailor’s family, ECRC acts as a conduit for referral and information for the Individual Augmentee family.

ECRC becomes the administrative parent command while the GSA Sailor is deployed.

ECRC mans two e-mail Helpdesks to assist you with questions and information. Most questions are responded to within one working day. Use the Helpdesks to quickly connect to the correct subject matter expert for questions about your IA /GSA orders, points of contact, training, advancement, admin, pay, operations, supply, medical, checklists, travel claims, Noble Eagle numbers, leave, housing, or general information:

ECRC IA HELPDESK at:  
[ecrc.hq.fct@navy.mil](mailto:ecrc.hq.fct@navy.mil)

For family assistance, information and resource referrals:

ECRC FAMILY READINESS HELP-  
DESK at: [ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil](mailto:ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil)

For EMERGENCIES contact the ECRC 24  
hour Staff Duty Officer at: (757) 763-8640

ECRC 24 hour toll free Family Careline at  
1-877-364-4302

## Fleet and Family Support Center

[www.ffsp.navy.mil](http://www.ffsp.navy.mil)

Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) are staffed with professional educators and counselors who can provide a wealth of information and services that fall into three categories:

1. Information and referral.
2. Education and training.
3. Counseling.

Fleet and Family Support Centers provide deployment preparation briefs tailored specifically for IA Sailors and their families. They also provide discussion/support groups to enable you to network with other IA family members and information to make your homecoming go smoothly. A staff member from the FFSC nearest you will call you to give you information about services available for IA families towards the beginning of your Sailor's IA deployment. They will maintain contact with you throughout the deployment if you would like.

Types of questions the FFSC can help with include:

- Where can I get help to find a job?
- How can I help my child deal with their mom's/dad's deployment?



- Where can I get information about budgeting, car buying, or saving and investing?
- Who is my command Ombudsman and what is their telephone number?
- How do I locate an IA family discussion group?
- Where can I get information about moving to our new duty station?
- We're having marital problems, where can we get counseling?
- I'm feeling overwhelmed with this deployment, who can I talk to?
- I need help managing stress, where can I go?
- We're expecting our first baby, where can we get information about being parents?
- Where can we get a speaker for the next Family Readiness Group Meeting?

## Joint Family Support Assistance Program

<http://militaryhomefront.dod.mil>

- **Joint Family Assistance Program was established to support military families who do not live near a military installation. They are staffed with a:**
- Child & Youth Consultant.
- Military and Family Life Consultant.
- Military OneSource (MOS) Consultant.
- American Red Cross representative.
- USDA (Operation Military Kids) representative.

Most JFSAP teams are located at the state's National Guard headquarters.

## Military OneSource

[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)

Military OneSource is a web site sponsored by the Department of Defense to provide information and resources to Sailors and their families. You must register to access some features.

Military OneSource provides articles, links and CDs you can order for free on a variety of topics including:

- Financial.
- Midlife and retirement.
- Addictions and recovery.
- Work.
- Health.
- Parenting and child care.
- Relocation.
- Personal and family readiness.

Military OneSource has several useful features:

- The web site is available 24/7.
- Telephone numbers are available 24/7 for individuals to call and talk with a consultant.
- The staff will research a topic and send results.
- Referrals for private counseling sessions and legal consultations are also available.
- Simultaneous translation in more than 150 languages is available.

To talk to a Military One Source consultant: Stateside: 800-342-9647

Collect from Overseas: 800-3429-6477 (use applicable access codes, 122-001-010 for Japan, S-KT, Singapore and Thailand, 001 for Korea, S-Darcom and 00 for all others.)

Collect from Overseas: 1 484-530-5908.  
En español llame al: 1-877-888-0727  
TTY/TDD: 1-866-607-6794

## Navy Knowledge Online

<https://wwwa.nko.navy.mil>

Navy Knowledge Online is a web portal that provides a great of information about IA/GSA duty including:

- The mandatory ECRC IA Checklist.
- Required online courses.
- Information about combat training and in theater duty stations.

A Navy Family Community section page is also available on NKO. There is an online spouse forum for discussion as well as accurate answers to questions.

To log onto NKO you must have an ID card which registers you in DEERS and allows you access to NKO.

If you are a family member and do not have an NKO account, go to the NKO website and follow the directions under “Register as a new guest user.”

## Personnel Support Detachment

[www.pasas.navy.mil](http://www.pasas.navy.mil)

The Navy’s Personnel Support Activity (PSA) is the agency that provides administrative, personnel, pay and transportation support including:

- Defense Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS) support.
- Family and service member identification cards.
- Transportation services.
- Travel claim processing.
- Transition processing.

Each installation has a local Personnel Support Detachment, to locate yours contact the above web site.

## Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society

[www.nmcrcs.org/services.html](http://www.nmcrcs.org/services.html)

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRCS) is a volunteer based not for profit private 501(c) (3) organization sponsored by the Department of the Navy. No financial assistance is received from the Department of the Navy to conduct the Society's programs.

The Society provides interest-free loans or grants to help with emergency needs such as:

- Emergency transportation.
- Funeral expenses.
- Patients share of medical/dental bills.
- Food, rent, mortgage and utilities.
- Disaster relief assistance.
- Child care expenses.
- Essential vehicle repairs.
- Pay problems or delays.
- Unforeseen family emergencies.

Financial assistance is provided on a need basis. All loans are interest free and normally repaid by allotment. In some instances, if repayment would cause a hardship, assistance may be provided as a grant.



Loans are made to the service member.

During deployments, in the absence of the service member, an eligible family member may seek assistance with a valid power of attorney or a NMCRCS pre authorization form can be placed on file at the NMCRCS Office prior to deployment. If neither is available, the service member will be contacted to provide authorization and to agree to repayment terms.

Layettes are "Baby's First Seabag" containing over \$100 worth of baby items. These are provided to all Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel or family members who are expecting or have had a new baby when they participate in the Budget for Baby Class or an individual budgeting session. For those families living in remote locations, a layette can be provided upon your request from a NMCRCS Office. Each layette contains a handmade blanket or sweater set, crib sheets, onesies, hooded towel, bibs, socks, receiving blanket and burp cloths.

Visiting nurses make home, clinic or hospital visits to provide health and resource education, promote continuity of care between patients, doctors and military or community resources.

Thrift shops are available at many installations. They re-sell usable clothing, household and uniform items at affordable prices.

Need based Education Scholarships and loans are available to eligible spouses and children of active duty and children of retired and deceased service members.

For more information visit your local office or call 800-654-8364.

## Naval Services FamilyLine

Naval Services FamilyLine is a volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for all sea service families for over 42 years. FamilyLine's programs and services are provided free to all Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard families.

Naval Services FamilyLine has committed its resources to providing outstanding information, referral and education services. FamilyLine's mission is to provide a foundation of mentoring and education resources to military spouses and family members. Mentoring is an important aspect of FamilyLine's success. Spouses mentor spouses with Compass, a training course covering all aspects of Navy life. Command Spouse Leadership Course and Command Master Chief Spouse Leadership Course both offer to educate and promote an effective Command Support Team.

Naval Services FamilyLine also focuses on developing publications that are distributed worldwide and available online at the website ([www.lifelines.navy.mil/Familyline](http://www.lifelines.navy.mil/Familyline)). A pivotal component of these resources includes the Guideline Series Publications. These publications are resourceful handbooks that provide beneficial guidance on various facets of family support services. To date there are nine publications included in the Guideline Series.

- Sea Legs
- Guidelines For Launching Clubs And Family Readiness Groups
- Social Customs And Traditions Of The Sea Services
- Guidelines For Spouses Of Commanding Officers And Executive Officers
- Guidelines For The Spouses Of Command Master Chiefs (CMC) And Chiefs Of The Boat (COB)
- Guidelines For Spouses Of Chief Petty Officers
- Guidelines For Spouses Of Individual Augmentees (IAs)
- Guidelines For Navy Reserve Families
- Are You Ready? Guidelines For Navy Family Emergency Preparedness

To contact an NSFL representative:

- Website: [www.lifelines.navy.mil/Familyline](http://www.lifelines.navy.mil/Familyline)
- Telephone: 202-433-2333
- Toll-Free Telephone: 1-877-673-7773
- DSN: 288-2333
- Fax: 202-433-4622
- Email: [nsfamline@aol.com](mailto:nsfamline@aol.com)



## Operation Military Child Care

[www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org)

Operation Military Child Care is a Department of Defense initiative to support child care needs of military parents who are activated or deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Active duty families who are unable to access care on military installations are eligible during the deployment period and for 60 days after the return of the military parent.

This initiative helps eligible military families locate and subsidize affordable child care in local communities. Military families who are using licensed/legally operating community-based child care programs and providers pay reduced fees.

Child care costs often increase when your Sailor is deployed. This subsidy program can be used by spouses who are employed or looking for work, going to school or have special medical needs. For more information contact the National Association of Child Care Re-source and Referral Agencies at 800-424-2246 or visit their web site.

## Operation Purple Camp

[www.operationpurple.org](http://www.operationpurple.org)

Operation Purple Camp Program was created in 2004 to help military children struggling with having a parent deployed. Any military child can apply; however, priority is given to those children who have a parent/guardian or family household member deployed between May 2007 and September 2008. If all spaces are not filled with campers who meet the deployment criteria, the remaining camp slots are filled with any military child from any service branch, the National Guard, Reserve, PHS and NOAA. "Deployment" is defined loosely as it is recognized that TDY and travel can often take service members away from family for significant periods of time.

Registration for the free summer camps begins in late spring for all Operation Purple camp locations. Details on how to register and the necessary forms to apply for camp are available at [www.operationpurple.org](http://www.operationpurple.org). Click on the applicable state for camp registration, application, and contact information. In 2008, 100 weeks of camp in 62 locations, in 37 states and territories were available.





## Operation Military Kids

[www.operationmilitarykids.org](http://www.operationmilitarykids.org)

Operation: Military Kids is a collaborative effort with America's communities to support children and youth of National Guard, Reserve and active duty families. State 4-H Military Liaisons in 34 states in partnership with the National Guard, Reserve, the Military Child Education Coalition, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, The American Legion, schools and other community organizations are supporting youth before, during, and after the deployment of a parent or loved one.

Some of the programs include:

- Workshops for community professionals who work with youth to offer an insight into military culture, the deployment cycle and suggest ways to understand the needs of and provide support to military kids and their families through community resources.
- Hero Packs are backpacks filled by non-military youth with mementos and items designed to help connect kids with their deployed parent.
- Speak Out for Military Kids is a youth-led, adult supported project that generates community awareness of issues faced by youth of military families. Through simulations, interviews, and research, participants begin to understand what military families go through during deployment. As the youth form speakers bureaus they develop presentations, public service announcements, videos, and other materials and actively seek opportunities to share their experiences with others in the community (e.g. school assemblies, youth club meetings, city council meetings, fairs, and teacher in-service programs).
- Mobile Technology Labs are used to facilitate connections between deployed service members and the children left behind.



## TRICARE

[www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil)

TRICARE is the health care program for Sailors and their families. Reservists and National Guardsmen are also eligible for TRICARE coverage when they are on active duty, pre and post mobilization.

The four most common TRICARE programs are:

- TRICARE Prime.
- TRICARE Extra.
- TRICARE Standard (formerly called CHAMPUS).
- TRICARE Reserve Select.

TRICARE provides a dental benefit, a pharmacy program, and TRICARE for Life for most Medicare-eligible uniformed service retirees. There is also a Program for Persons with Disabilities (PPPWD) that can help with some of the costs associated with specialized medical equipment and services. In addition, mental health services are available.

Each TRICARE program has its own eligibility and enrollment requirements. Individuals must be registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) to be eligible for any TRICARE benefits. Enrollment for TRICARE coverage is subject to location, eligibility category, and the specific program requirements. Costs and enrollment fees also differ by program.

Health benefits advisors are available at local TRICARE Service Centers (TSC) or military treatment facilities (MTF) to help with questions regarding health care services or go to the above web site.



# Deployment Readiness Assessment

**Do a quick self-assessment to determine your deployment readiness:**

	YES	NO
1. Do you have your Sailor's phone number, mailing and e-mail addresses?		
2. Do you have your Sailor's Noble Eagle Number?		
3. Do you have contact information for your Parent Command?		
4. Do you have the contact information for your Ombudsman?		
5. Do you have copies of your Sailor's orders?		
6. Is your contact information current in DEERS, NFAAS, at your Sailor's command and with the command ombudsman?		
7. Do you have a will and a power of attorney?		
8. Have you attended a deployment readiness briefing offered by the FFSC?		
9. Do you have access to myPay, bank accounts, allotments and safe deposit boxes?		

Suggestions for corrections or improvements can be made at [Handbooks.Feedback@navy.mil](mailto:Handbooks.Feedback@navy.mil). Hardcopies of this handbook are available from Naval Services FamilyLine at Email: [nsfamline@aol.com](mailto:nsfamline@aol.com).



FamilyLine is an organization of Navy Family volunteers who believe in sharing experiences, strength and hope as military spouses. This collective knowledge is offered in various guideline series booklets. FamilyLine is happy to provide education resources, spouse organization contacts, and information & referral to any family members as well. To obtain additional free copies of our publications, contact us at:

Phone: 202-433-2333

Toll Free: 1-877-673-7773

DSN: 288-2333

Fax: 202-433-4622

Email: [nsfamline@aol.com](mailto:nsfamline@aol.com)

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## **GUIDELINE SERIES PUBLICATIONS OFFERED BY NAVAL SERVICES FAMILYLINE:**

### **Sea Legs**

Get started on the right foot-- a handbook for all Navy spouses! A must for the spouse new to the military lifestyle! Sea Legs contains useful information on matters such as family support services, rights, privileges and benefits, moving, health and medical care, social customs and courtesies, and deployments. The Navy's history, its mission and structure, a naval terms glossary, and a very useful list of resource addresses are also included.

### **Guidelines for Launching Clubs and Family Readiness Groups**

Most military spouses feel that being a part of Command-sponsored organizations are among the most valued opportunities of their military lives. These organizations provide a lot of fun, friendship, and support we all need and enjoy. This booklet was created to help new groups get started. It is also filled with helpful information, guidelines, and new ideas to revitalize existing organizations. There are tips for getting started, suggestions on organization and structure, and lots of ideas for programs, activities, service projects, and fun fund-raising.

## **Social Customs and Traditions of the Sea Services**

Piping Aboard, Parade Review, Colors and Taps, Saluting, Change of Command -- Most traditions observed by the sea services today originated in early history. This concise booklet acquaints spouses with the social customs, traditions, and organizations that are part of the sea service communities. Knowing the history helps enjoy the traditions. Understanding the customs puts you at ease.

## **Guidelines for Spouses of Commanding Officers & Executive Officers**

Exciting, busy times ahead! Not sure what the expectations are in your spouse's new position? Need a hand getting organized? This booklet is an invaluable aid in defining the spouse's role as part of the Command Support Team. It was written by Navy spouses who have experienced the command tour and offers practical insights. Included is information specific to each of the sea services, including deployments, support resources and emergency guidelines. This guide is also an excellent supplement to materials when attending the Command Spouse Leadership Seminar.

## **Guidelines for the Spouses of Command Master Chiefs (CMC) & Chiefs of the Boat (COB)**

Recently revised with the help of senior enlisted spouses who have experienced the CMC/COB tour! With the inauguration of the new Command Master Chief Spouse Leadership Course in Newport, RI, this companion guide is an invaluable resource for the CMC Spouse. It helps you define the important role of the CMC Spouse and offers ideas on how to decide what is right for you. Included is information specific to each of the sea services, such as deployments, support resources and emergency guidelines.

## **Guidelines for Spouses of Chief Petty Officers**

Congratulations! Your Sailor has just been selected for advancement to Chief Petty Officer! The spouses of the 2003 Senior Enlisted Panel have put together this booklet of information just for you. It is full of good references and practical answers to your questions.

## **Guidelines for Spouses of Individual Augmentees (IAs)**

Sailors and their families must always be ready for deployment. Deploying as an Individual Augmentee (IA) may pose unique challenges for you and your family. This handbook provides basic information to help you navigate the IA experience.

## **Guidelines for Navy Reserve Families**

This guide is designed to provide Reserve members and their families with information that will assist them in preparing for their military lives. The helpful material is written by personnel from the Family Support Program, Navy Reserve Forces Command, and experienced Reserve spouses.

### **Are You Ready? Guidelines for Navy Family Emergency Preparedness**

Today's ever changing world presents an increased need for emergency preparedness. Naval service families must also be prepared - with or without their sailor. This handbook provides vital information to ensure families are prepared as their own "first responders". Included in the handbook is valuable information on creating a Family Emergency Plan, completing Emergency Contact Cards, and compiling an Emergency Supplies Kit. Additionally, there is detailed information regarding what to do before, during, and after different types of emergency situations.



## *Acknowledgement*

Guidelines for Spouses of Individual Augmentees (IAs) has been written and edited by personnel at Family Readiness Programs at Commander, Navy Installations Command in response to the needs of Navy spouses around the world.

Naval Services FamilyLine is grateful to these dedicated professionals and to those spouses who have contributed their invaluable assistance and worldwide experience in serving our Navy families.



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